

STUDY REPORT FOR
PROPOSED HISTORIC PROPERTY DESIGNATION AT
42 COMPO ROAD NORTH
OCTOBER 2011



Town of Westport
Historic District Commission
Research and Photography by Tod Bryant of Heritage Resources
in collaboration with HDC Chairman Francis Henkels,
HDC Member Robert Weingarten,
HDC Staff Administrator Carol Leahy, and
Property owner, Claire Everhart



Westport Historic District Commission

Town Hall, Room 108

110 Myrtle Avenue

Westport, Connecticut 06880

October 6, 2011

State Historic Preservation Council
Commission on Culture and Tourism
Historic Preservation and Museum Division
One Constitution Plaza, Second Floor
Hartford, CT 06103

RE: Proposed Historic Property Designation at 42 Compo Road North

Dear Council Members:

In June 2011, a letter of request by the property owner was submitted to the Historic District Commission members to designate 42 Compo Road North as a local historic property.

At a public hearing on July 13, 2010, the Commission approved this property for study. The Commission supports this designation for the following reasons:

- The property owner supports the designation as a local historic property.
- The 2007 Westport Plan of Conservation and Development states that in order to maintain the town's historic character and qualities represented in its many significant buildings, structure, monuments, landscapes, cemeteries, public right of way, districts and sites, the Historic District Commission should propose, as appropriate, the establishment of additional local historic districts and local historic properties as defined by state statute.

The study report has been completed and, in accordance with CGS sec. 147(b), is being submitted to you for your comments and recommendations.

The following items are included for your review:

- Statement of significance
- A survey map of the proposed local historic property
- Site map and current photographs of the property
- Historic Property Inventory Form
- Town Ordinance with boundary description
- The letter of petition received from the property owner, and property owner contact information

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Francis H. Henkels
Chairman, Historic District Commission

cc: Gordon F. Joseloff, First Selectman; Larry Bradley, Dir. of Planning and Zoning; Hadley Rose, RTM Moderator; Gail Kelly, Town Attorney; Patricia Strauss, Town Clerk; Steve Edwards, Dir. of Pub. Works

Statement of Significance - Alvilde and John Hunt House ca. 1900

Description

The house at 42 Compo Road North is a two story saltbox. It was originally part of the Westport Sanitarium property. When built, it was probably a small, two story, vernacular building. It was purchased from the Sanitarium by John and Avilde Hunt in 1939 and remodeled to its current saltbox form by them in 1940. Their creation of a saltbox house from a vernacular building makes this an interesting example of a late Colonial Revival house. Most Colonial Revival buildings of this period follow Georgian models and this earlier form is rare.

Setting

The house faces northwest on the north side of Compo Road North. It is on a .56 acre parcel and is set back approximately 20 feet from the road, which runs along the west side of the property. The lot slopes upward toward the east and it is bordered by mature deciduous trees on all sides. There is a terraced garden to the west of the house and a lawn to the east. The house is surrounded by other residential properties, most notably the John Green/Gideon Hurlbutt House to the south. This house was built ca. 1715 and is one of the oldest in Westport. It was also once owned by John and Alvilde Hunt.

Architectural Description

Exterior

The house, as it is today, is a four bay, two story, Colonial saltbox with a central chimney and an attached two car garage on the east elevation. It is a wood frame structure on a rubble stone foundation under the older section and a concrete foundation under the 1940 addition. The house is sheathed in painted clapboard. It has an asphalt roof. Most of the windows are double hung with six-over-six sash. There is a large 35 (lite) window flanked by two narrow six over nine windows on the east elevation of the kitchen, a similar 63 light window on the south elevation of the living room. There is also a small, square, three over three window near top of the gable on the west elevation.

The house has two exterior entrances. On the façade, there is a wooden door with nine lights in its upper half and a solid lower section in the second bay from the west. This door is protected by a small roof supported by curved brackets. It is reached by two stone steps and a stone landing. This doorway leads to the kitchen and stairs to the basement. On the west elevation there is a six panel wood door in the north bay. It is set in a frame with four square lights above the door and it is reached by two stone steps on the northwest side of a stone landing. This doorway appears to have been the original entrance, since it leads to a staircase and the parlor. (Photos 1, 2 and 3. All photos are by Tod Bryant unless otherwise noted.)

On the rear or southeast elevation of the house there is a screened porch and a small patio on the first story. There are two dormers on the shed roof at the second story: a small one with a peaked roof and a single six over six window near the southwest elevation and a wide, shed dormer with five six over six windows near the southeast elevation. (Photo 4.)



Photo 1. 42 Compo Road North, view southeast.



Photo 2. 42 Compo Road North, view east showing side door.



Photo 3. 42 Compo Road North, view southwest showing garage.



Photo 4. 42 Compo Road North, view northwest showing dormers.

Interior

The house is a two story structure with an attic and a full unfinished basement. The house may be entered through either of the exterior doors, the screened porch at the rear, or, more often, through the attached garage.

The Hunt's radically changed the floor plan of the house when they renovated it in 1940 and created the saltbox. They added a kitchen at the front of the house and removed walls in the parlor and at the back of the house to create a more open plan. (Photos 7, 8 and 9). On the second floor, the saltbox roof and dormers made it possible to enlarge the two existing bedrooms. (Photos 10 and 11)



Photo 7. Kitchen view northeast.



Photo 8. Living room, view southeast.



Photo 9. View from dining room into living room, view west.

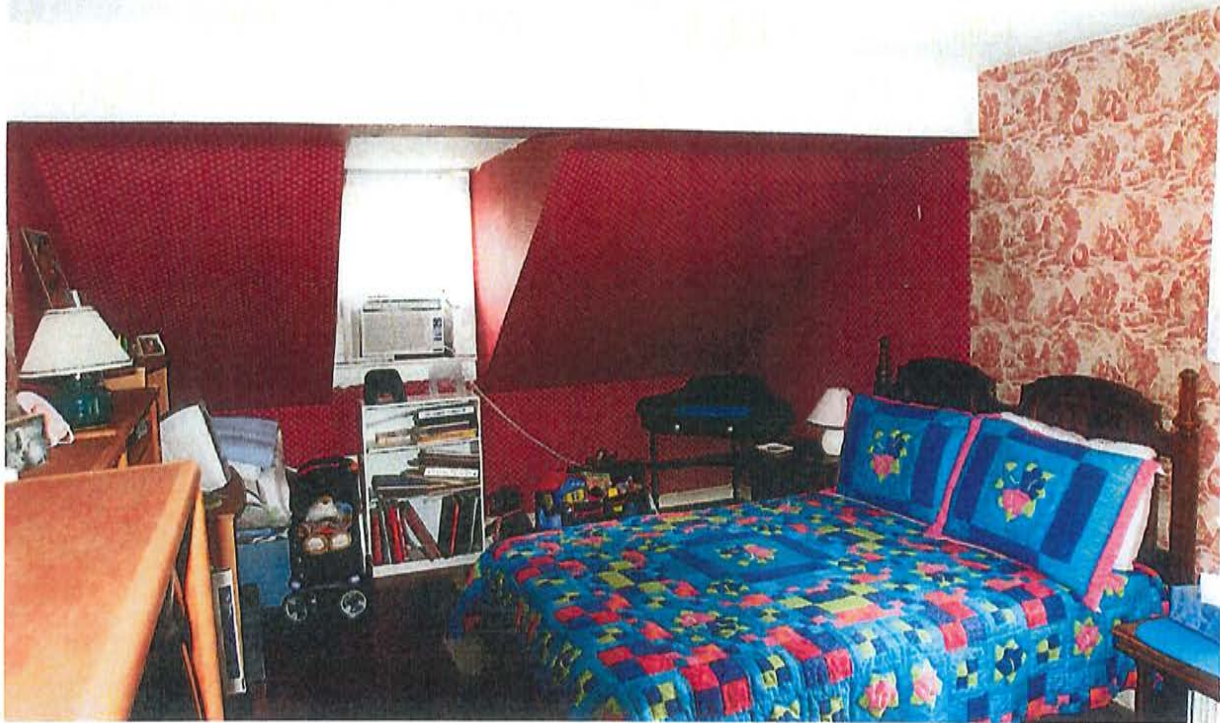


Photo 10. Second floor west bedroom, view south, showing saltbox extension.

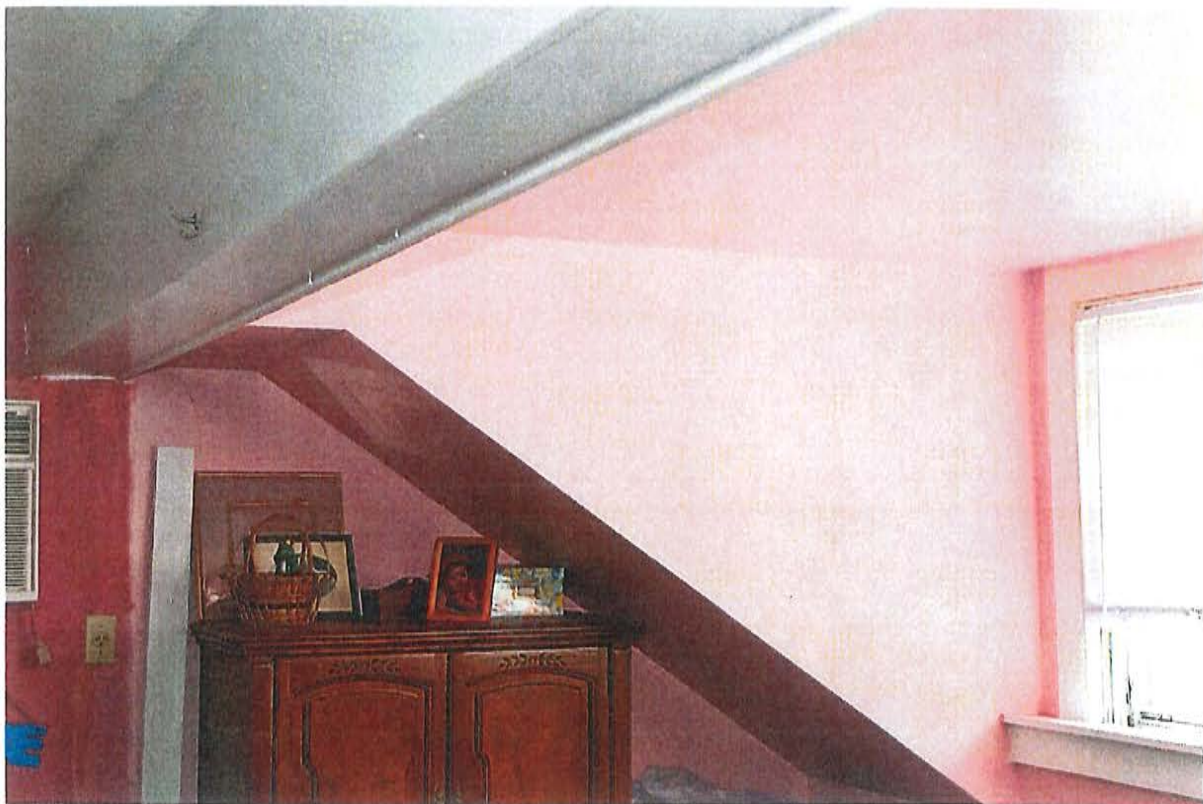


Photo 11. East bedroom, view southeast, showing saltbox extension and interior of shed dormer.

The Hunts did keep some of the original features of the house, but they may also have modified them somewhat. The small stair hall entered through what is now the side door is probably part of the original floor plan, as are the stairs, but the newel post and handrail may date from 1940. (Photo 12.) The fireplace in the living room was probably also original to the house. (Photo 13.)



Photo 12. Stair hall, view north, showing newel post and handrail.



Photo 23. Fireplace, view northeast.

It is an interesting point that these relatively modern changes are made possible by the ancient device of the one story addition, saltbox roof extension and dormers.

A map of the property can be found in Figure 1.

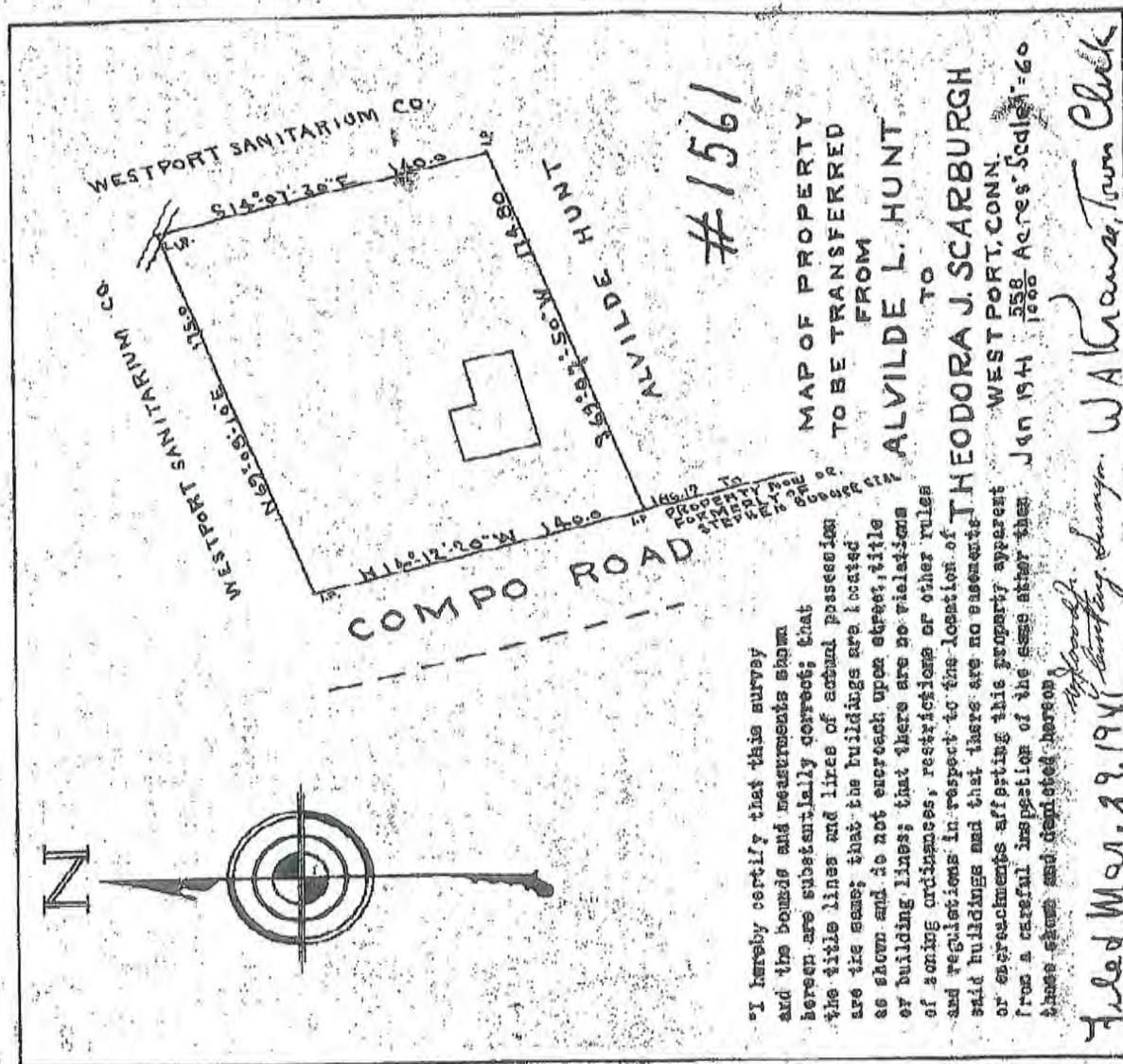


Figure 1. Map of property at 42 Compo Road North. (Town of Westport Land Records)

Evolution of the House

This home has evolved over time and it was not originally a saltbox. The oldest part of the house, which dates from about 1900, is the two story western section which includes the current side entrance and chimney stack. The house does not appear on early maps of Westport, but it does appear on a 1911 map of the town on property owned by the "Sanatorium Co." (Figure 2.) The

original building on this site was probably a two story front-gable vernacular building constructed by the Westport Sanitarium. The sanatorium had purchased the land in 1891 from Stephen R. and Sarah E. Williams.

The Tax Assessors field card date is 1900, which is a reasonable build date, based on the original building's construction details. The original building may have been a utility structure of some kind or it may have served as a residence for an employee of the sanitarium. A note in the 1940 Westport Tax Records under the listing for the Westport Sanitarium specifically mentions Alvilde Hunt as the owner of this property. The tax record states that there is one building on the property. By 1941, the appraisal has increased by \$200 and the Assessor lists another building, which is probably the attached garage.

This section of the house sits on a rubble stone foundation. Floor joists and roof construction in this section show the use of a circular saw and dimensional lumber, both of which are consistent with the early twentieth century. (Photo 5.) The saltbox roof is built with dimensional lumber which does not have saw marks of any kind, indicating a later period of construction. (Photo 6.)

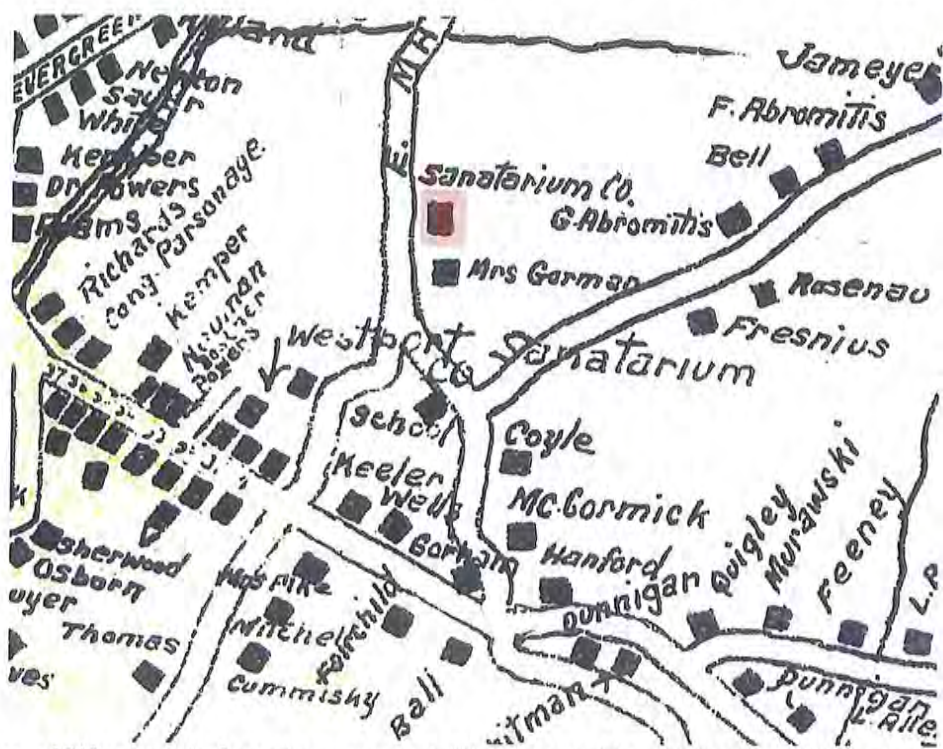


Figure 2. 1911 map of Westport showing current 42 Compo Road North. (Westport Historical Society)

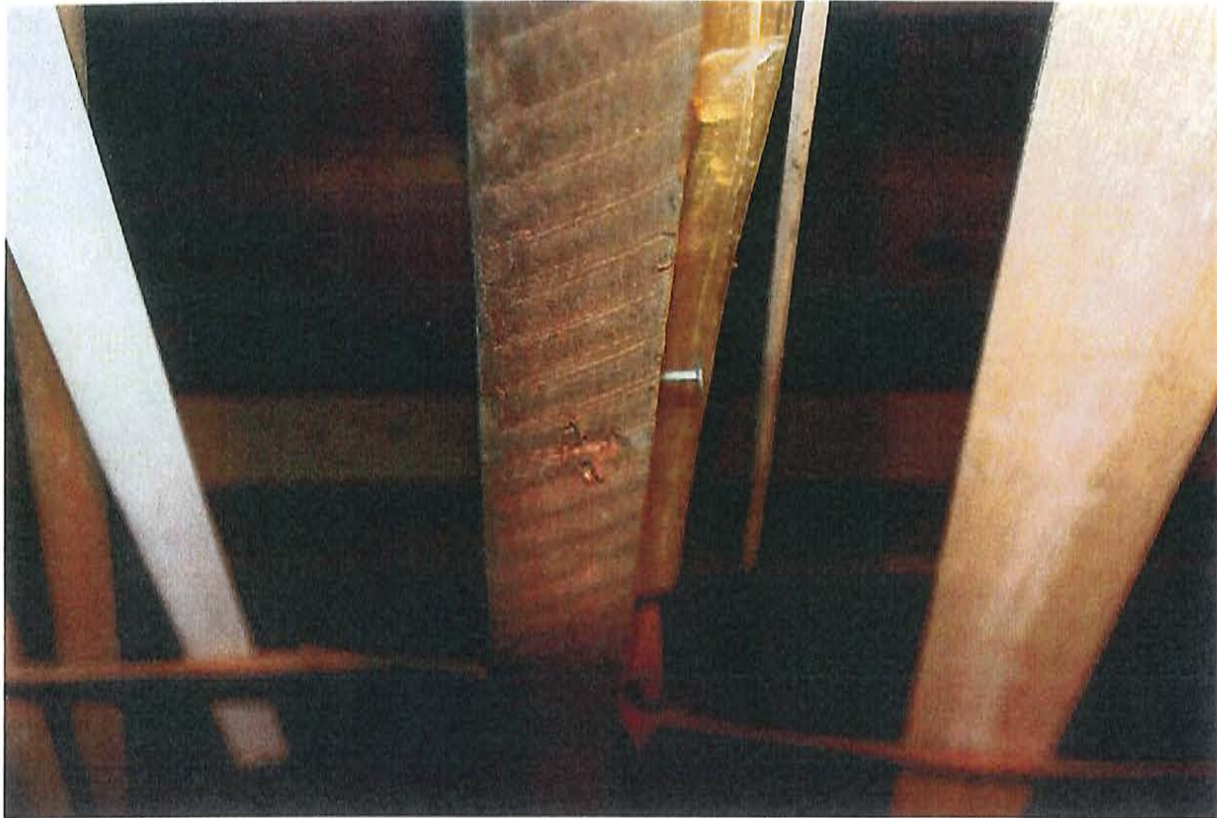


Photo 5. Circular saw marks on floor joist in older section of basement.



Photo 6. Saltbox roof construction.

The date of construction for the garage and probably the other renovations can also be established by date stampings on a radiator in the garage and a toilet on the first floor. Both dates are 1940, which is consistent with the tax records. (Photos 7 and 8.)

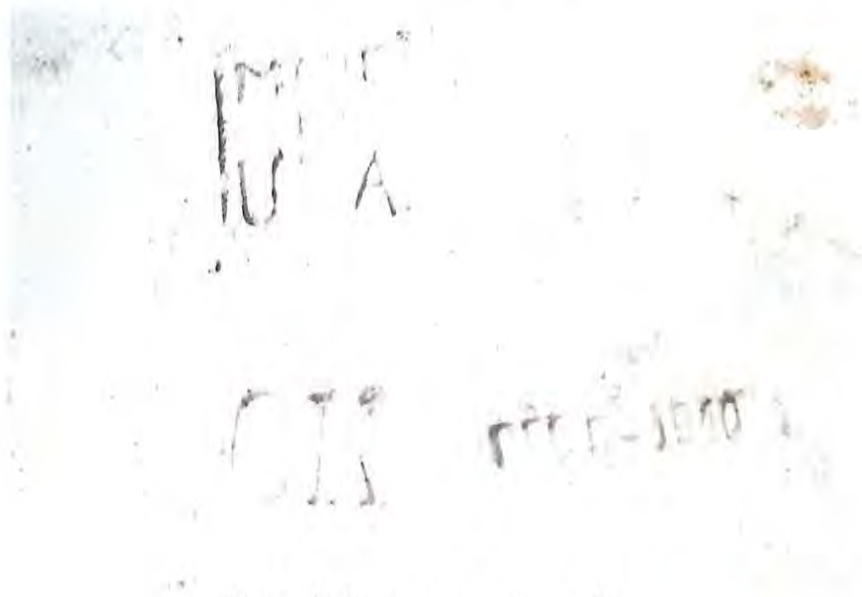


Photo 7. Date stamp on toilet.



Photo 8. Date stamp on radiator in garage.

Alvilde and John Hunt House - Period of Significance and Significance

The period of significance for the Alvilde and John Hunt House at 42 Compo Road North is 1900 to 1941. This period stretches from the earliest probable date of construction through the time of the Hunt's Colonial Revival changes. This house shows that even as late as 1940 Westporters were continuing the 18th century tradition of adding a one story addition to a two story house and then

extending the roof to create classic New England saltbox shape that would have been used in the early eighteenth century. It also shows that the Colonial Revival took many forms in Westport.

By 1918, John Miller Warner Hunt has married Alvilde and is living on Grant St. in Norwalk and he is working for Hunt & Downs on State St. in Westport. Between 1923 and 1935, Alvilde and John continue to live in Norwalk, but they change addresses many times. During these same years, John is also changing jobs/occupations. He works as a clerk, then a paper finisher. In 1929 he's listed as a Building Contractor, and in 1930 he's listed as a Carpenter. In 1934-36 he's listed as a mason. In 1937 he is "removed to Westport." In 1938 they are living on 3 Wakeman Drive in Westport and he is listed as a mason. 1939 he is still a mason and working/living "off N. Compo." The same is true in 1941. In 1942, he's living on North Compo Rd. and is employed by the Aluminum Co. of America in Bridgeport.

When he and his wife bought 42 Compo Road North, John Hunt had worked in the building trades for many years. They may have seen an opportunity to purchase an older home cheaply, renovate it, profit from the sale. Not only the interior changes, but also the stone steps and landings at the front and side doors are probably his work since he is listed in the Westport City Directory as a mason during this period. The changes they made to this house are significant because they used an old method of enlarging a building in order to accommodate a more modern program on the interior.

Current Status

Rex and Claire Everhart bought the John and Alvilde Hunt House in 1964 and they have been excellent stewards of the house and property. The interior and exterior of the house are in excellent condition and its systems have been updated. Rex Everhart was a well know actor on Broadway in film and on TV. His career spanned fifty years and he was nominated for a "Best Actor" Tony Award for his 1978 role in the Broadway musical "Working." He also appeared in thirty-two movies and TV shows, from a 1951 appearance on the *Lux Video Theater* to *Law and Order* to the voice of Maurice in the 1991 film *Beauty and the Beast*. He passed away in 2000, but Claire continues to live in and care for the house.

References

Garvin, James L., *A Building History of Northern New England*, University Press of New England, Hanover:2001.

Internet Movie Database, *Rex Everhart*, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0263591/> accessed August 1, 2011.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York: 2005.

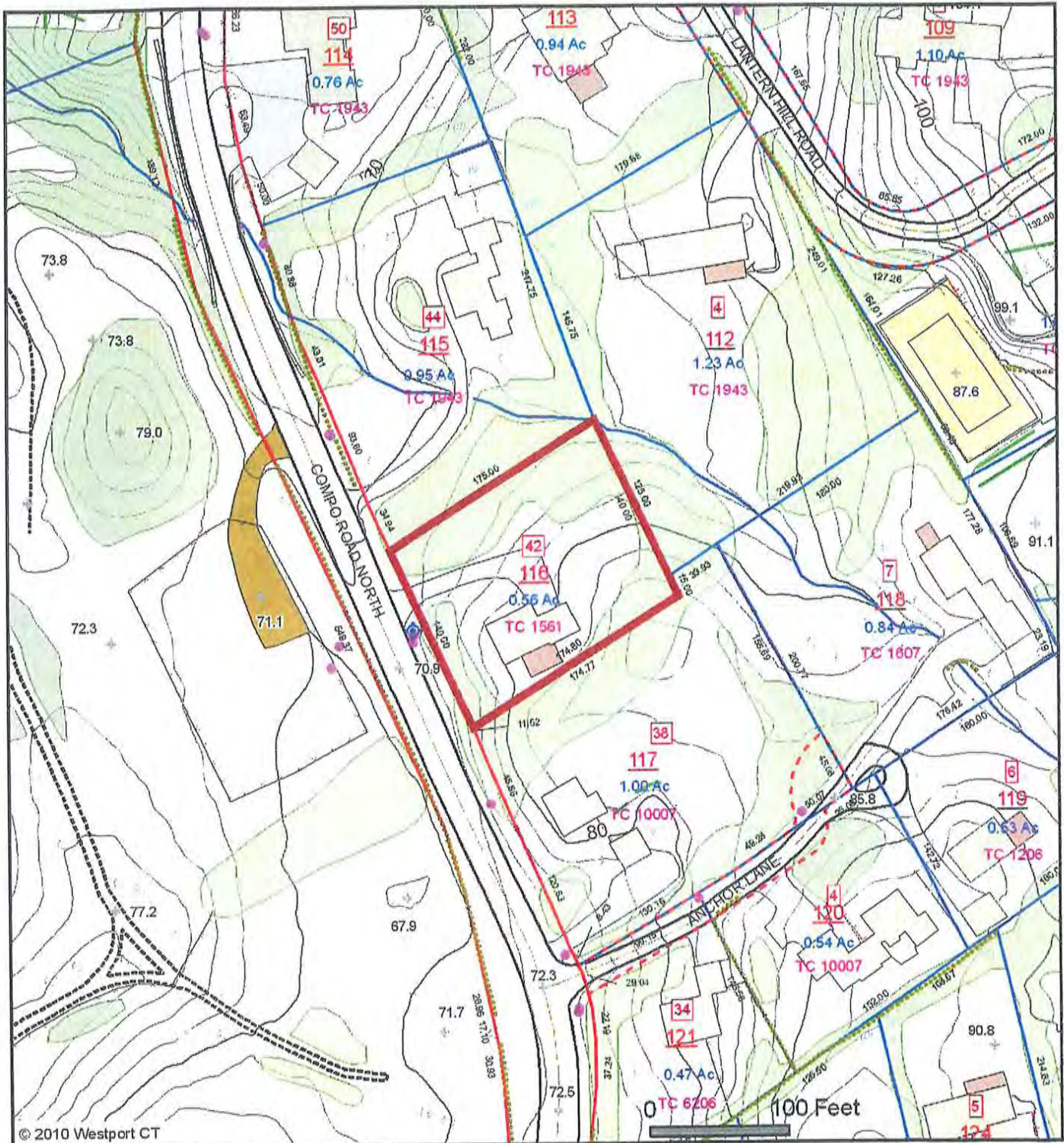
Minor, Henry R., *Map of the Town of Westport, Connecticut*, South Norwalk: 1911.

Price and Lee, *City Directories of Norwalk and Westport*, New Haven, 1923-1942.

Town of Westport, *Land Records*

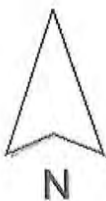
Town of Westport, *Tax Records*, 1940, 1941.

United States, Selective Service System. *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. Washington, D.C.



Westport, CT

42 Compo Road North



This data is prepared for Westport, CT and is compiled from recorded deeds, plats, taxmaps, surveys, planimetric maps, and other public records and data. Users of this information are hereby notified that the aforementioned public primary information sources should be consulted for verification of the information contained on the map. Westport and its mapping contractors assume no legal responsibility for the information contained herein.





HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Please send completed form to: Stacey Vairo, National Register and State Register Coordinator,
Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

* Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) _____
 Building Name (Historic) Alvide and John Hunt House
 Street Address or Location 42 Compo Road North
 Town/City Westport Village _____ County Fairfield
 Owner(s) Estate of Rex and Claire Everhart Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: private residence
 Historic Use: private residence
 Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No
 Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain _____
 Style of building Colonial Revival/ Saltbox Date of Construction ca. 1938

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input type="checkbox"/> Brick | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |

Structural System

- Wood Frame Post & Beam Balloon Load bearing masonry Structural iron or steel
 Other _____

Roof (Type)

- Gable Flat Mansard Monitor Sawtooth
 Gambrel Shed Hip Round Other Saltbox

(Material)

- Wood Shingle Roll Asphalt Tin Slate Asphalt Shingle
 Built up Tile Other _____

Number of Stories: 2 1/2 Approximate Dimensions 58'x32'

Structural Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Exterior Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? _____

Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain: Saltbox lean-to, attached garage and interior changes made 1940.

FOR OFFICE USE: Town # _____ Site # _____ UTM _____
 District: S NR If NR, Specify: Actual Potential

ARTICLE II
SPECIFIC HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND LANDMARKS

38-24 Historic landmark properties

The property and buildings at 42 Compo Road North, to be known as the Alvilde and John Hunt House, situated in the Town of Westport, County of Fairfield and State of Connecticut being shown on a certain map entitled "Map of property to be transferred from Alvilde L. Hunt to Theodora Scarburgh, Westport, Connecticut" dated January 1941, prepared by William J. Wood Jr., which map is on file in the Westport Town Clerk's office as Map No. 1561.

RECEIVED

JUN 17 2010

HISTORIC DISTRICT
COMMISSION

June 17, 2010

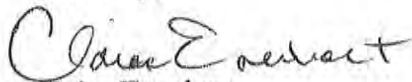
Ms. Margaret Feczko
Chairman, Historic District Commission
110 Myrtle Avenue
Westport, CT 06880

Dear Ms. Feczko and Commission Members,

I, Claire Everhart, as resident of 42 Compo Road North, would like my property to be considered for designation as a Historic Landmark Property.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,



Claire Everhart
42 Compo Road North
Westport, CT 06880